United Nations

Press Release

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council expresses "great emotion" over tragic incident which cost life of Ukrainian "blue helmet" and injured three other Ukrainian soldiers at Sarajevo.

+ Security Council announces its support for decision of Rolf Ekeus, Executive Chairman of Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament, to maintain inspection in Iraq; expresses concern for safety of United Nations inspectors there.

+ Secretary-General sends fact-finding mission to Latvia to investigate alleged discriminatory practices against minorities in that country.

+ Prime Minister Milan Panic of Yugoslavia urges Security Council to approve import of heating oil and other oil products to meet urgent civilian needs; says his Government will eliminate causes for sanctions against that country.

+ General Assembly begins two-day meeting to observe tenth anniversary of adoption of Plan of Action on Ageing; Secretary-General, in opening statement, says population ageing is challenge to world society as much as to national societies.

+ Permanent Observer of Palestine to United Nations, drawing attention to Palestinian prisoners in occupied territory on hunger strike, calls on Security Council to take actions to end continuous breaches of 1949 Geneva Convention by Israel.

+ Questions of Jammu and Kashmir and crisis in Kosova, discussed in Third Committee, as it concludes debate of racial discrimination and right to self-determination.

+ Germany creates office of Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid; appoints to that position Hansjorg Eiff, former Ambassador to Belgrade.

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For information media—not an official record

The Security Council has expressed deep sympathy to the family of the member of the Ukrainian batallion of the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) who lost his life on 10 October, and to the Government of the Ukrainian Republic.

In a statement read out by its President, Jean-Bernard Merimée (France), the Council also expressed "great emotion" on learning of the tragic incident in which three other Ukrainian soldiers were seriously wounded at Sarajevo. Members also expressed their very grave concern at the continuation of hostile actions against members of UNPROFOR.

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The Security Council has announced its support for Rolf Ekeus, the Executive Chairman of the Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament, and his decision to maintain Commission's inspection in Iraq, while at the same time expressing its concern for the safety of the United Nations inspectors there. The Council was briefed this afternoon by Mr. Ekeus on the work of the Special Commission.

In a statement read out by its President, Jean-Bernard Merimée, the Council said Mr. Ekeus had drawn its attention to press reports of a high-level statement made in Iraq which would "constitute a threat" to the security of United Nations inspectors. Council members urged Iraq to fully cooperate with the Special Commission and seize opportunity to demonstrate its willingness to comply fully with the Council's resolutions.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has decided to send a fact-finding mission to Latvia to investigate alleged discriminatory practices against minorities in that country. The decision is in response to a request by Anatolijs Gorbunovs, Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia.

According to a United Nations official today, the Secretary-General has asked Ibrahima Fall, Director of the Centre for Human Rights, to head the mission, which will leave as soon as Mr. Fall returns from a mission in Africa where he is now.

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With winter approaching, Prime Minister Milan Panic of Yugoslavia has urged the Security Council to approve the import of quantities of heating oil and other oil products to meet urgent civilian needs and has assured the Council that his Government will take steps to eliminate the causes for the imposition of sanctions against that country.

In a letter to the President of the Security Council, dated 7 October, Mr. Panic expressed his Government's readiness to oversee the use of the oil products to ensure that they were not used for any other purposes. "It would be a terrible tragedy for the elderly, sick and children if it were impossible

to ensure the heating of hospitals, schools and other similar institutions, including the heating of refugee centres, he said. Nearly 875,000 tons of oil and oil products, which Yugoslavia cannot supply from its own production, will be required, he said.

The Security Council imposed mandatory sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) by its resolution 757 of 30 May. That resolution calls for an embargo of all Yugoslav products and commodities, financial and economic contacts, sports contacts and scientific, technical and cultural exchanges, except for supplies for humanitarian purposes and foodstuffs.

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This morning, the General Assmebly began two days of plenary meetings to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of an international plan on ageing and to consider a set of targets for the year 2001.

In his statement to the Assembly, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said population ageing was an unprecedented demographic phenomenon which had far-reaching ramifications and was a challenge to the world society as much as to national societies. The last decade had raised the question of ageing in new terms. Previously, particularly in developed countries, ageing had been hidden, while it was held in greater regard in traditional societies. Perhaps one of the major objectives of the programme for the next decade would be to make that a more universal conception, he said.

The Assembly yesterday proclaimed 3 December as the International Day of Disabled Persons, ending two days of debate marking the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983 - 1992).

Also yesterday, the Assembly continued its debate of the Secretary-General's "An Agenda for Peace" and his report on the Work of the Organization. Among the issues discussed were the crucial role of preventive diplomacy and the size, composition and function of the Security Council. The representative of Indonesia, speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said those countries had serious misgivings about the use of force in peace-keeping. Collective enforced action should be used only as a last resort with the approval of the Assembly. The call for the creation of a United Nations standing armed forces was "premature".

The representative of Vanuatu said his country wished to proceed with great caution in endorsing proposals that would allow overt intervention by developed countries into the affairs of developing countries for the selective promotion of certain aspects of human rights. It was not healthy for the situation of international democracy if a small group of countries made all of the major decisions involving peace and security for the entire international community.

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Other speakers called for an enhanced role for the General Assembly and greater utilization of the International Court of Justice in the settlement of disputes.

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Nasser Al-Kidwa, the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, has called on the Security Council to take actions to put an end to continuous breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 committed by Israeli authorities and the suffering of Palestinian prisoners in the occupied territory.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 12 October, Mr. Al-Kidwa reported that several Palestinian protesters, who had been demonstrating in solidarity with thousands of Palestinian prisoners who are on a hunger strike, had been killed and some 200 wounded by Israeli troops. The hunger strike was undertaken on 27 September after the prisoners had exhausted all other means of calling attention to their grievances, the letter said.

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The issue of self-determination for Jammu and Kashmir had been brought to the United Nations almost 45 years ago and still remained unresolved, the representative of Pakistan told the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) yesterday, as it concluded its debate on the issues of racial discrimination and the rights of people to self-determination.

The Representative of India pointed out that the principle of self-determination did not apply here since Jammu and Kashmir were an integral part of a sovereign country and would remain so.

Also addressing the Committee yesterday, the Representative of Albania said the crisis in Kosova had become a "time bomb". The shocking war in the former Yugoslavia had actually started 10 years ago, he said, waged against Albanians, who constituted the third largest population in former Yugoslavia. The crumbling of Yugoslavia was due to the oppression of the absolute Albanian majority in Kosova by Serbia. Serbia's policy there gave Kosova Albanians only one recourse:leave Yugoslavia. The final stage would be independence, he said.

The Representative of Austria pointed out that, while self-determination was one of the most influential legal principles of the century, there had been no definition of the principle, which had to be approached on a case-by-case basis.

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The Government of Germany has created an office of a Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and has appointed as its first Commissioner, former Ambassador to Belgrade, Hansjorg Eiff.

According to a press release issued today by the German Permanent Mission to the United Nations, the task of the Commissioner will be to coordinate the measures of humanitarian aid taken by the Federal Government, non-governmental German aid organizations and other donor countries. His responsibilities will include ensuring that German humanitarian aid is used as effectively as possible.

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